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The Indebtedness of the City of New-York to its University.

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AN ADDRESS

TO THE

ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY

OF THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK,

AT THEIR

TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY,

28th JUNE, 1853.

BY PROFESSOR J. W. DRAPER, M. D.

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Officers of the Association.

1853—4.

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At the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK, held in the University Chapel, on Wednesday, 29th July, 1853, the following Resolution was unanimously adopted:

*Resolved*, That the thanks of this Association be tendered to Dr. JOHN W. DRAPER for his able and highly interesting Address; and that a copy be requested for publication.

Extract from the Minutes.

WM. R. MARTIN,

*Secretary.*

## ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN:

When I received your invitation a year ago to address you on this occasion, my first intention was to decline the proffered honor, since there are so many among you, who, by profession and practice, are far better fitted for such a public performance. If you want an eloquent speaker, you must look for him in the pulpit or at the bar—certainly not in the gig of a Doctor.

But considerations which will presently appear, led me to change this intention; and then came the inquiry, What shall the address be about? There is the whole range of literature and the whole range of science, but of science you have had enough from me. Indeed, as my thoughts wandered from one topic to another, no matter at what point I began, they gradually shaped themselves into the saying of something about the University.

That this should be the case is not at all surprising. Many of the best years of my life have been spent in it—some of the happiest of yours. And so it furnishes an appropriate subject on the occasion of our present meeting.

If ever there was an institution misunderstood, it has been this. The City of New-York has not comprehended her University. She has virtually said to it: Thou great Mendicant! what has become of the hundreds of thousands of dollars I have given? Where are those promised crowds of youth I expected in thy halls? How is it that in twenty years and at all this cost thou hast completed the education of only four

hundred and fifty-five persons? Are there not in my streets half a million of people, what is the meaning of these contemptible classes of sixty or seventy annually under thy roof?

My friends! you know it is true that this has been the feeling, and the University has remained submissive and without a reply. From time to time, as emergencies arose, generous and religious men here and there have afforded relief, but the City has stood aloof. And by degrees there have crept in among some of us, misgivings,—nay more, by hearing the thing reiterated so often, we may have come to believe that our duty has been very imperfectly done.

Is it not then right and expedient, if there be among us one, who from position and connection has the necessary knowledge, that he should stand forth and answer? That is what I am going to do to-night. I have served the University for nearly two-thirds of its existence, and sometimes under circumstances of responsibility. For what may be now said, no one but myself is accountable; it is not the result of the promptings or counsel of any person. I trust that what may be presented to you, and through you to the public, may tend to awaken a better feeling towards this deserving institution.

Universities have two distinct duties to perform. It is their office to increase the stock of human knowledge, and to disseminate that knowledge among men. In former times, they were the centres round which the cultivators of science and literature clustered, and the reputation of many of the great European institutions is connected with the discoveries made in their walls. Their office of disseminating knowledge may be accomplished in many different ways—as by the printing of books, or by tuition. We should remember this in coming to a decision as to the actual merit of these establishments. In the United States, the measure too often applied is the number of students—a standard wholly fallacious. All the world assigns the glory of the immortal



discoveries of NEWTON to the University of Cambridge; but does any one trouble himself to inquire how many students were there in those times?

Fourteen years ago, there stood upon the floor of the Chemical Laboratory of our University, a pair of old-fashioned galvanic batteries. Like the cradle of a baby, they worked upon rockers, and so the acid might be turned on or off. A gray-haired gentleman had been using them for many years, to see whether he could produce enough magnetism in a piece of iron at a distance, to move a pencil and make marks upon paper. He had contrived a brass instrument that had keys, something like a piano in miniature, only there was engraven on each a letter of the alphabet. When these were touched, the influence of the batteries were sent through a copper wire, and a mark answering to a letter was made a long way off.

It is related that the University of Oxford, six hundred years ago, was the scene of a similar incident. A friar, by the name of ROGER BACON, invented a brass instrument, in the shape of a man's head, which he could cause to speak. The public set it down for magic, and the Church taking note of it, and other inventions, imprisoned him for ten years. In vain he wrote a book on the non-existence of magic. The Pope was inexorable. But, in the midst of the dark ages, Oxford knew her interests better than New-York does in our times. With the highest ecclesiastical influences against her, she had furnished her philosopher with \$10,000 to carry on his inquiries—an immense sum for that period. And four centuries after, a German traveler relates that he was shown, at that town, with pride, a house on which was written, "This is the house of Friar BACON."

How does the matter stand between the City of New-York and its University, as respects the invention of the Magnetic Telegraph—the invention of the Senior Professor of this institution? What obligation is Professor MORSE under to the

City? Who is the debtor? Have the mercantile interests given to the University one thousandth part of the benefit it has conferred on them? Have not millions upon millions been made on the news of the steamships in Halifax and Boston? Do they not send to New-Orleans and back in a single morning? Nay, more! let us leave these poor and perishable interests, and look to grander results. Has anything been done to bind together this great confederacy of Republics, more effectual than those iron wires? Have they not given that consolidation which our greatest statesmen saw the value of—and despaired? Have they not made it possible for the Government at Washington to rule over the entire Continent?

But, perhaps, some one may say: All this is very well, but such inventions belong rather to the age than to any one man, and what MORSE did here would soon have been done by STEINHEIL, in Germany, or WHEATSTONE, in England. My good friend, you know nothing about the matter. Long after the telegraphic instruments were perfected, it was doubtful whether intelligence could be sent to any considerable distance. It is one thing to send an electric current a few yards, and a totally different affair to send it a thousand miles. Experiments which had been made under the auspices of the Russian Government, by Professor JACOBI, of the University of Dorpat, had led to the inference, that the law of the conducting power of wires, originally discovered in Germany, was correct; and, in addition, a corroborative memoir had been read before the Imperial Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg, by LENZ. At this time, so little was known in England as regards this important point, that some of the most eminent natural philosophers connected with Universities there, embraced the opposite view. I may not be able to make the precise point in dispute clear—it was this: A current passing through a certain length of wire suffers a certain amount of loss;—if it should go through a

wire a thousand times as long, will the loss be a thousand times as great? The Russians said yes, the English said no. If the former was the case, it was universally concluded that the electric telegraph would not be practicable for any considerable distance. A series of experiments was made in the University of New-York, which established, beyond all question, the truth of the Russian view; but, at that time, the higher mathematics were cultivated in our laboratory as well as mere experimenting, and on submitting the results to such a mathematical discussion, the paradoxical conclusion was brought out, that it is a necessary consequence of that law, that after a certain length of wire has been used, the losses become imperceptible. You may find a statement of these things in *Silliman's Journal*.

Encouraged by this, a party of gentlemen went with the inventor of the telegraph to a rope-walk near Bloomingdale, one summer's morning, and there tested the truth of these conclusions on lengths of wire varying from one to some hundred miles. The losses of the currents were measured by the quantity of gas set free in the decomposition of water. The result was completely successful, and telegraphing for any distance became an established certainty.

But let me pursue my argument as to the claims of the University on the City, and cite another fact that has come under my notice.

When the French Government, in 1839, purchased of DAGUERRE his invention of Photogenic drawing, its applications were very limited—the process was adapted to interiors, statuary and architectural subjects; but wholly unsuited to landscape scenery, or to portraits. The inventor himself had made attempts at applying it to the taking of likenesses, but had given it up in despair. Soon after the publication of DAGUERRE'S invention in America, a series of experiments was conducted in our laboratory, with a view of determining whether the difficulties could be removed. Under an impression that the human skin is not white enough, we first

commenced by dusting persons' faces with flour, intending, if this should promise success, to obtain from the ladies a knowledge of the mysteries of some of those cosmetics, which they are said to use for improving their complexions; but we quickly found that the difficulty was not of this, but of an optical kind. The result was successful. Those who are curious in these matters, will find an account in the London and Edinburgh Philosophical Magazine, for September 1840. The Edinburgh Review, in an elaborate article on the subject, gives due credit to the University, and in like manner so did the French and German scientific journals. The identical instruments employed, still remain in our Cabinet.

The taking of portraits from the life, by the Daguerreotype, is by far the most valuable part of that interesting process. It has exerted no small influence on miniature painting, and has introduced, as one may say, a new school in that branch of the fine arts.

It has been estimated that more than ten thousand persons obtain a support from this application of Science to the Arts. There is scarcely a town of any note that does not contain its photographers, and though it was said at first that the success which had been met with in the University Laboratory, was due to the brilliant American sun, the continued superiority of American artists in London and Paris, shews that that was scarcely the true cause. It is by no means the least gratifying part of this result, that it has furnished a suitable employment for many females. In the existing state of our social system, there are few things more worthy the attention of good men than that interesting class of the other sex, who are thrown upon their own exertions for support. Cut off from those pursuits in which we may without hesitation engage, they are brought in contact with a harsh and pitiless world. Are there not thousands whom nature has gifted with the acutest sensibilities, who are constrained by the tyranny of Society, to choose between a servile dependence

or inadequately-compensated labor. Ladies! I am no advocate for the so-called rights of women. In the affairs of life, yours are the passive and ours the active duties. It is for you to reign and for us to govern. But you cannot tell what a gratification it has been to me, to have been instrumental in introducing an appropriate and beautiful avocation, in which many of your sex may engage, without compromising a single delicate or womanly feeling; and in the argument I am pursuing in thus setting forth the claims of this institution of learning, I feel that your earnest sympathies are with me, and that among you the University will find advocates for the sake of what it has done in this way.

The success which has thus been met with, in showing the possibility of taking portraits by the Daguerreotype, led to an extended investigation of the chemical action of the sunlight, which was continued uninterruptedly for more than twelve years. A great many interesting and new facts were discovered, which, though they excited but little attention here, were viewed with interest in foreign countries. The papers detailing these, which would form a volume of considerable size, were re-printed, condensed or criticised, in almost every European capital. In the Annual Reports on the Progress of Chemistry, made to the Royal Society of Sweden, Baron BERZELIUS, the highest authority among modern chemists, spoke of them uniformly with applause, never once with critical condemnation. It is an interesting recollection, that this great chemist, a few days before his death, sent his portrait with a kind message, conveying his appreciation of what had been done here for Science. A commission of the French Academy repeated one of our series of experiments, and verified its correctness; a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, another. In England, one of the most eminent living astronomers, Sir J. HERSCHEL, composed a memoir on an experimental illustration which had been sent from this place; and the German

chemists repeated a great many of our experiments, and discussed the explanations we had given. In Switzerland, they habitually re-printed in full or in abstract, the greater part of these publications. Indeed, if any of you are desirous of knowing the particulars of what our University has done in these respects, you will learn with more correctness at the foot of the Alps, than you will in the City of New-York. Even in Italy, the experiments made here have excited attentive consideration, and some of them have been the subjects of a formal and flattering report to the Royal Academy at Naples, by one of its most distinguished members.

But why should I go on in this way? What I have said has been for the purpose of putting the scientific department in a right position before you; and what I have said, is for that purpose, more than enough. Let any, even among the most favored colleges of our country, show that it has done more.

Extensive researches, such as are here spoken of, can only be carried on at a heavy cost. It will excite a smile among you to learn that the amount devoted to the support of the Laboratory, and intended also to meet the expenses of the course of lectures delivered to the Senior Class, was one hundred and twenty-five dollars a year; and, of late, even that has ceased. Yet, during the last fourteen years, the actual expenses incurred have been many thousand dollars; and it may, with perfect truth, be said, that the entire sum has come, not from the City, not from the University treasury, but from the private resources of a single individual.

Now, that our accommodations are so much improved, we can afford to talk about those times. Our laboratory was then in a little, dark back room, without ventilation. The morning sun struggled almost in vain to see what we were doing—for the window-panes were covered with an incongruous arrangement of Venetian blinds and Gothic mullions.

A hole in the ceiling led up into the chapel above, to the pulpit of which the material for the daily lecture was carried in a tea-tray. I called it a pulpit, because they used to preach out of it. A clergyman, who also statedly occupied it, regarded it as a pneumatic trough, because I experimented in it. And this I think it really was ; for, recalling the Greek etymology of that epithet, it plainly indicates the double function, spiritual as well as chemical. Our laboratory work commenced at seven in the morning, and continued, uninterruptedly, till after midnight : and, as might have been readily foreseen, what, with the impure air and mental application, the individual chiefly engaged twice contracted a fever, and narrowly escaped with his life.

In this imperfect and brief manner, summing up the case, I say that the City has received, directly and indirectly, from one department alone of the University, a full return for whatever it has given. New-York is known all over the world as a great commercial emporium, but it aspires to be recognized as the Metropolis of America. For that, there is wanted something more than streets of palaces, and extravagant expenditures in private life—something more than the dissipations of fashion. It must have its opera-houses, academies of music, its picture-galleries, its collections of statuary, great libraries, museums, and costly establishments for the culture of science—a better science than that of turning tables. With the fast-coming wickedness of Paris, it must provide those noble institutions, which are the glory of Paris. As yet it is merely in its transition state ; it is passing from a town to a metropolis : that state in which money is the only source of personal distinction ;—but ten years will put an end to such a condition. The question will then be, not what does a man own, but, what has he done. In a country where there is no landed aristocracy, when a high state of civilization is reached, professional distinction will eventually over-ride wealth.

I wish now to present the University to you, under another point of view. In 1841, it established a Medical Department, which, through the exertions of its Faculty, attained at once the highest prosperity. At this great school, many thousands of students have attended, and about twelve hundred have completed their professional education, and graduated. These—your brother Alumni—are scattered over every part of the Continent. There is scarcely a county into which they have not carried the name and reputation of the University. It is not for me to speak of the men who were the founders of that Institution. Some are in an untimely grave, the victims of undue intellectual exertion or of anxiety. Of those who remain, you will find the names of some connected with the profoundest works of philosophical Medicine, and the most splendid achievements of Surgery. Doctrines, which have been first taught in the public halls of that College, are now recognized all over the world, and incorporated in the great body of scientific medicine. But I shrink from using this language of praise towards those who have been my associates,—the dead cannot hear me, and the living it offends. Let me confine myself to the inquiry, how the matter stands with the City, on this point.

The entire expenditure of the Medical Department of the University, has been, up to this time, probably about \$200,000, of which not a cent has been contributed by the City. The State, at different times, has given about \$12,000, and, beyond this, everything has been supplied by the exertions of the Faculty. It is estimated that upwards of a million of dollars have been brought to the City by students, and of this a very large proportion has been expended among tradesmen of small means, keepers of boarding-houses, &c. At the present time this Faculty supplies medical advice and medicine to about two thousand destitute persons a year, and for some time past, the very existence of the Academical Department has hung upon means derived from the Medical



College. For Diplomas, nearly \$24,000 have been paid to the University.

Can you point out, in any part of the world, an Institution which has done more for the cause of learning and charity? Is not the City deeply indebted to it for the wealth it has brought here, for the charities so abundantly dispensed, and for the scientific reputation given?

From the facts thus presented, you will infer that in two of its departments, the Scientific and the Medical, the University offers an example of brilliant success. Then why is it, with this before its eyes, that the public persists in the misunderstanding I alluded to at the outset? A ready answer may be given.

Public opinion forced the University into a wrong course, and gave it, at its inception, a wrong shape. Deriving its view of what a University should be from the English ecclesiastical institutions, it transplanted here their spirit, and even their mechanism. No allowance was made for the difference of countries or of times. It would have answered well, if an American college had immense Church patronage to bestow. The self-supporting quality of such institutions depends on two things. The right kind of instruction must be given, and the pupil must have his means of living furnished when his education is complete. It is this combination which crowds our Medical Colleges. They give a thorough education: and that completed, the lucrative practice of medicine is the result. It is this which fills West Point—an appropriate education—and then the army.

The remarks I am now making apply to nearly all American Colleges; for they have all the same construction, and all exhibit the same results—inability to support themselves. It is not to be denied that their peculiar arrangement has arisen from the influence of the ecclesiastical element. From the Revolution no body of men has been so profoundly impressed with the truth, that the continuance of the American

system depends on the education of the people, as the clergy ; none have more zealously worked for it. Go where you will, from the oldest to the most recently settled States, you will find a clergyman at the beginning of every one of these Institutions. The debt of gratitude we owe them, is great indeed—so great that it is with hesitation we may criticise their labors. But I am speaking to educated men—many of them clergymen—and, therefore, speak with that frankness a man may use to his friend. It is admissible, even for me, to treat the work of these great and good men just as, in a laboratory, I would treat some costly and complicated machine, that would not work—take it to pieces, and see where the difficulty is.

In the twenty years now finished, the Academical Department has graduated four hundred and fifty-five persons. This represents the work it has done in a community of now more than half a million of people. Then it is clearly an indisputable fact, to use language which this mercantile community can understand, that we have been trying to sell goods for which there is no market. Considering the system of free scholarship among us, I presume that less than two hundred of those graduates have been purchasers of our wares ; and this in twenty years !

Well, what are the wares we have been offering ? Chiefly the classics and literature. For a length of time the expenditure on these two branches was nearly \$10,000 per annum, while, for the scientific, it was less than \$3000. With this preponderating advantage, there surely must be some intrinsic difficulty, or the result would have been different.

We need not go far, to find what the difficulty is. Before a youth can enter the University, he must be able to read Cæsar, Virgil, Cicero, Sallust, Xenophon and Homer. Now, let each of us, clergymen, physicians, lawyers, merchants, agriculturists, ask himself, has the occasion ever occurred when that amount of classical learning was not enough for our wants ; and all that we attained more, was it not attained

to be forgotten? Within the last fifty years, the times have wholly changed. Physicians have dispensed with Latin and Greek; lawyers have done the same: even politicians and popular orators have ceased to decorate their eloquence with classical display. Look at the speeches in the English Parliament, in the time of PITT, and FOX, and BURKE, or, indeed, all through the last century. Look at them now. I am not inquiring whether this be for the better or the worse, but am dealing with a fact. The style of public oratory has changed in this respect; and what better proof would you have that the ideas of the people have changed too.

Here, then, is the error we have committed. We put forth our exertions in a direction in which no result could be reached. We relied on the weakest part of the machine, instead of the strongest. In this practical community of men, hastening to be rich, we found no sympathy. Had we given schools of art and science, we should have been in relation with the masses; and—I use the word understandingly—the University would have run a glorious career. With every disadvantage in that direction, you see what she has actually done.

But some of you are on the point of exclaiming: What! is it possible that you are contemplating a University, in which the Classics and Literature should stand in a subordinate position? Oh! no, never. I know, too well, their influence on the heart and mind of man; too well, what they have done for our race. I know that the prime duty of these institutions is, not to teach men how to get rich, but to make them good citizens; nay, even more, religious men.

What is there that can better tend to develope those feelings, which are essential to the continuance of our existing social system, than instruction given to our youth, in the language and literature of those illustrious people, who were the parents of European civilization! How solemn the lesson that can be impressed by the teacher who has sat among the

ruins of the Capitol, or whose eyes have seen the Parthenon ; who can contrast the stately pages of Tacitus with the melancholy aspect of Austrian misrule. But these high results are one thing, and little boys translating text books into broken English, another ; for, after all, under the system our Colleges pursue, the time is not devoted to the philosophy, literature, history, of those ancient people—it is wasted in practising the mechanical art of translating ; and of our Professors, how few there are who have taken the pains, or been at the expense, of visiting the countries they are called upon to illustrate. In other branches we should detect such incongruities at once. What should we think of a chemist, who had never been in a laboratory ; or of a physician, who had never seen an hospital ?

It has been too much the practice to speak of these tongues as dead languages ; they may have ceased to be vernacular, but in their influence they still live. They are the instruments by which Christianity has been delivered to us. They have determined the mode of thought of Europe, and so they have become immortal. Nay, more : I do believe that many of you will witness great events which their very names suggest. That dread military monarchy which, from the times of PETER the First, has been gradually overshadowing the East, and which, since the close of the wars of the French Empire, has been all but able to dictate to the civilized world, is preparing to stand forth, the protector of the Holy Places, and to assert its rights as the depository of the religion of the CÆSARS. Of what avail is infidel and distracted France, against believing, united, conquering Russia. It is written in the Book of Fate that the Bosphorus shall be darkened by the breath of her cannon. There are some of you who will live to see the quarrel of the middle ages resumed, and the Greek Church awakening from its sleep. The walls of the Vatican will resound to the pacing of the Muscovite sentinel. He who founds his claims on antiquity, must take the conse-

quences of the fundamental laws of Antiquity. Fifteen hundred years ago, when Christianity was first recognized by law, did not the Bishop of Rome own his allegiance to the Emperor? The gray-haired head of the Latin Church will be summoned to acknowledge his revolt of centuries, and stand in the presence of his sovereign at Constantinople.

But, while I thus assert the dignity and value of a study of these languages, I consider that in our college system, the public expects from them results which they cannot possibly yield. It is but few American youth who care to saunter to the fountains of knowledge through the pleasant windings of their flowery path; the majority prefer the less-enchanted but more practical way. And for this reason in our seminaries of learning, the practical branches must take the lead and bear the weight, and the ornamental must follow.

The University, even in its Classical and Literary Department, has therefore done its duty. It has done precisely what its construction was calculated for. The public voice gave it this character, and the public must be contented with the result. What kind of reason is there in the man who is not satisfied that his wind-mill grinds flour, but wants it to fly too.

Our records show that considerably more than one-fourth of our graduates have entered the ministry, whereas in twenty years the Academical Department has furnished but twenty-nine physicians. This fact seems to prove, that in public estimation, the course we pursue is not regarded as a suitable preparation for the study of medicine, and the same may be said as respects the study of law. The preparation of young men for the ministry is undoubtedly one of the most important duties of a college, and in this respect there is reason to think that we compare favorably with the most highly-valued and patronized institutions. But then this is only one out of many duties. Had such an organization been given, that physicians, lawyers, merchants, engineers, agriculturists, had

found the same inducements that candidates for the ministry have done to join our classes, how much more prosperous would have been the state of our affairs.

Among the evils which weigh down American colleges, there is none, in my judgment, more powerful than our system of awarding honors. A bachelor's degree is the object of the student for four years. Yet what is a bachelor's, or what a master's degree? There was a time in Europe when they meant something, and conveyed a solid something; but what do they mean, or what are they worth in the United States now? You who are perfectly familiar with the working of our rules, know well, that so far as the distribution of college honors on a Commencement day is concerned, the practical sciences have scarcely any weight—the classics and literature overbear everything. Here, again, I think that those good men who, by their patronage and their wealth, have been the props of our institutions of learning, have committed a mistake. It is a repetition of the old political blunder of giving a forced development by means of bounties. If the position of the Christian churches was the same now, as formerly, there might be some reason for drawing our young men, by such incitements, into these lines of study; but since the commencement of the present century that position has totally changed. Mere literary acumen is becoming utterly powerless against profound scientific attainment. To what are the great advances of civilization for the last fifty years due—to literature or science? Which of the two is it that is shaping the thought of the world? None have more thoroughly realized this great change than the authorities of the Roman Church. None recognized its coming earlier. After the philosophical troubles in Tuscany, in 1630, was not such a policy pursued by them, that among the French and Italian Jesuits were to be found the ablest philosophers of the age—men who could meet NEWTON or LEIBNITZ on terms of equality? The moral force which that order gained among the

thinking classes was due to this cause ; for, no matter where it may be found, high intellectuality will command esteem ; knowledge is power. The well-turned periods of some popular preacher may please the fancy of a Sunday morning's audience, but what of that ? The profound conversation of the scientific priest, though it may be heard in solitude, perhaps under a tree or on a grassy slope, will arrest at once the man of thought, make him an unconscious and involuntary missionary, and through him control a whole nation.

And, therefore, for such reasons as these, I would beseech those who are friends of American Colleges, to abandon the existing system. With an equal hand dispense your honors equally in every branch. Make no attempt at inciting the student to take an old-fashioned and profitless course, by holding forth fictitious rewards, and working on his desire for distinction ; that course of study is out of keeping with our state of society, and worse than useless to the Church. Instead of unmeaning bachelors' or masters' degrees, and valedictory and salutatory addresses, establish distinctions which shall appeal to the common sense of the people,—which shall plainly say, this young man was, in such a year, the best mathematician, or chemist, or Greek or Latin scholar, the University produced. But do not mix all these in one inextricable and unmeaning confusion. Don't swamp Science by crowding into the boat with her the skeletons of thirty centuries. Let each department go on its own merit, and have its own rewards. Cease from this system of bounties. Free-Trade will answer as well in a College as in Commerce. Let the native bent, the native talent, the native instinct of our young men, find its means of development unshackled, and you will have what you have not now,—men in the pulpit who can check the tendency of the age to materialism.

Many of the ablest American scholars look forward to the

establishment of a State or even National University, with ample endowments. You are aware that an organization for promoting this object, exists. It is undoubtedly entitled to the most cordial support which every educated man can give. But while we regard it in this light, do not let us shut our eyes to the difficulties in the way. Practical men, who have a thorough knowledge of the University system, and are conversant with the history of the colleges that have been established here or in Europe during the last fifty years, can foresee that, even though a million of dollars should be devoted to this object, and a score or more of professorships endowed, the success would be quite problematical. You have only to read the circulars and programmes published at the inception of this University. Could there be anything more liberal, more comprehensive, than was that scheme? In carrying out such plans in the United States, there will be always unavoidable difficulties in the way—the various opinions of important men, the well meant but prejudicial influences of religious sects, legislative interference invoked by the unscrupulous and ignorant, the necessity of conceding place or power to unsuitable persons—these, and many other such circumstances, would shape such an establishment into a system of compromises and expediciencies ; and, in spite of its wealth and patronage, it would be found utterly unsuited to the wants of the people.

These difficulties are all passed by in that condition which the University now presents. It has gone through its transition state. After twenty years it stands before the citizens of New-York with its debt paid, its great Medical College an accomplished fact, its Literary Department working successfully under the partial organization which has been given to it,—its Scientific, which has already furnished an earnest of what it will do, waiting for expansion. I know the feeling of its authorities—whatever the City will patronize, they will



attempt. And this, I say, is an infinitely better condition than could be reached at once, in any new and visionary scheme. I believe in improving what we have—what it has cost us twenty years and half a million of money to produce. I do not believe in wasting our exertions on novelties—which may turn out to be phantoms. No man can, in a moment, devise the plan of a University exactly suited to the wants of New-York. To be successful, we must pursue a tentative scheme—we must feel the way. We have lived through all those trials which are the necessary incidents of the early period of these Institutions, and have at last reached that position in which existence is no longer problematical, but our stability is assured. We are ready to be put in relation with the City.

Put in relation with the City, some one exclaims—what do you mean by that? I will tell you. There are in this City and its vicinity, three-quarters of a million of people, and from them we draw sixty students. We are offering what the City does not want. Our classes now are about the same that they were eighteen years ago—but in that time the City has more than tripled its population, and as to wealth and resources, increased a thousand fold. We have not grown with its growth, and this is what may be called *not* being in relation with the City.

What is it that constitutes the chief cause of that rapid advance which New-York is making in power and wealth? Industrial knowledge and industrial activity. There must be an affinity between the wants of the city and the nature of its institutions. Of what use would it be to transplant here German or French, or even English Universities? Their constitution may be suitable for European countries, but is utterly inapplicable here. This City, though great and prosperous, is only at the beginning of its greatness and prosperity. In twenty years it will be the centre of the Commerce

of the whole world. Its existing institutions of knowledge, if they do not conform to its needs, will find themselves abandoned or superseded.

We therefore, come to the conclusion, judging from the representations made here this evening, that what has been done thus far, in the University, is good; but that having made provision for the education of ministers of the Gospel of any religious denomination, and of physicians, and of literary men, there is next before us the great task of dealing with the true strength of New-York—its commercial classes, manufacturers, engineers, and mechanics;—the men who have little concern in knowing what was said or done in Athens or Rome, two thousand years ago, but who are craving for a knowledge how they shall conduct the business enterprise they are to enter on to-morrow. Let us hold fast to that which we have, and develop as quickly as we may. Our instinct is to satisfy the wants of the City. Let us remember that doctors, lawyers, and preachers, constitute only a small portion of the community. Let us address our exertions to that class, which, in some places, is the terror of great communities, but which here, if submitted to the influence of science and letters, will surely form the guard of public order. Let us, in a good cause, act boldly, and hoist the flag of free instruction of an evening, for the artizans of New-York, and trust to the City to see us safely through. Let us take counsel with those influential men who have hundreds in their employ, and try whether we cannot set a fashion that will bring them here. What nobler spectacle could be offered than this chapel, crowded with those brave men who constitute our fire and military forces, listening to literary and scientific discourses, in their holiday dresses, after the toils of the day. I heartily join in the sentiments recently expressed by an eminent clergyman, and trust that the time is not distant when we shall see the New-York

Mechanic passing up the steps of the University, and depositing the tools he has been using, behind the lecture-room door. Gentlemen, when that comes to pass, you will hear no more of the want of money. The University will then be in fact, what it is now in name—University of the City of New-York.

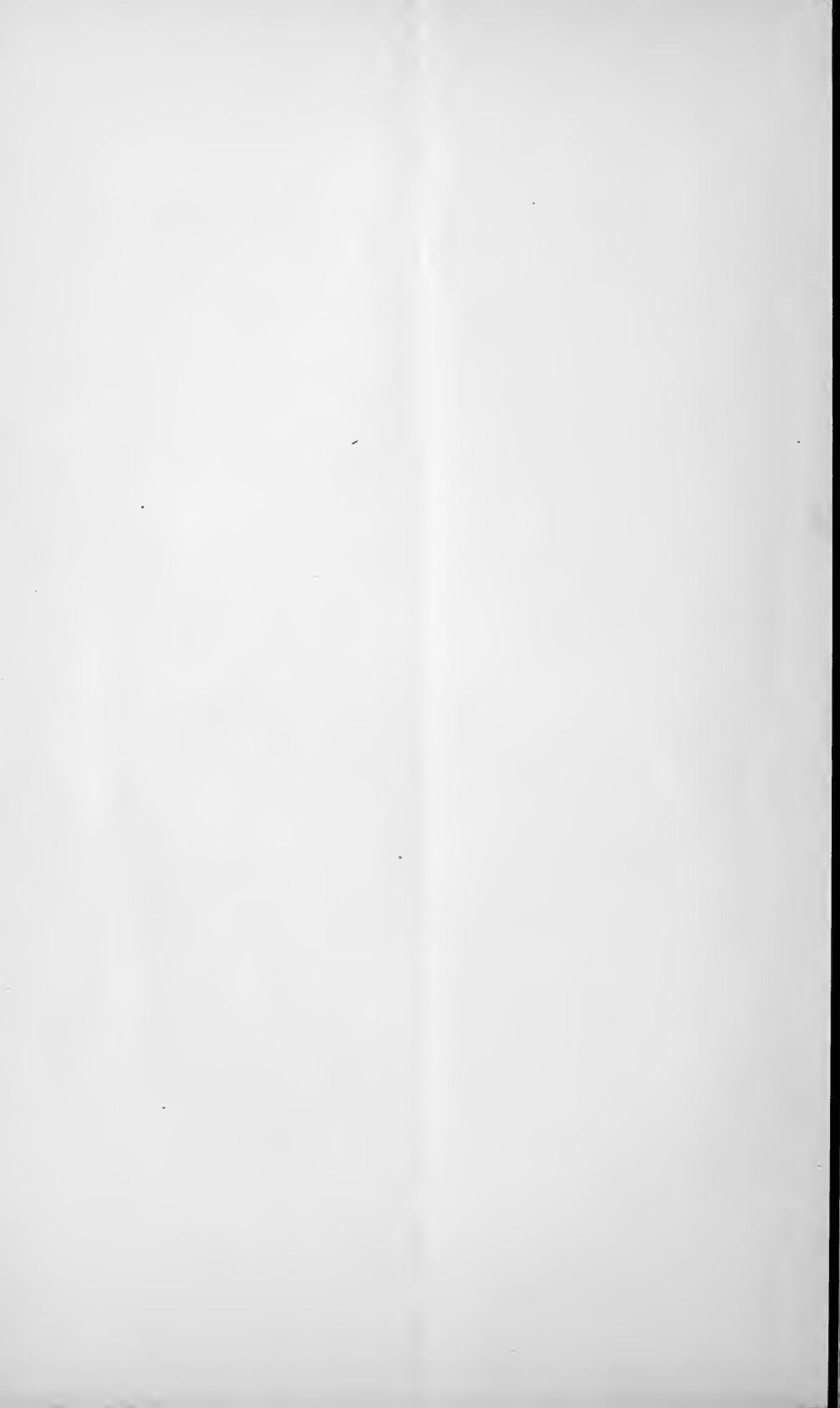
I consider that the position of the University is such, that it can no longer afford to be stationary—it must be progressive, and it will increase in strength just in proportion as it meets the wants of the people. I believe that a policy of a gradual expansion is its true policy—expansion in any direction that may be open. I have no faith in a sudden mushroom growth—no expectation of seeing a University rise, like an exhalation, out of the ground. A tree or an animal, transported hither from some other region, must either accommodate itself to our seasons and physical condition, or languish and die. Even men must be acclimated. Experience is everywhere shewing us that the educational system of Europe, transplanted here, will not succeed; and though good men have spared no pains, and have lavished their wealth upon it, it is an exotic that does not suit the climate; and there yet remains to spring from the American soil an indigenous growth, developed under our own particular influences, which shall rise, as the Indian corn-plant overtops the grain-grasses of Europe, and like it, profusely furnish abundant food for the people.

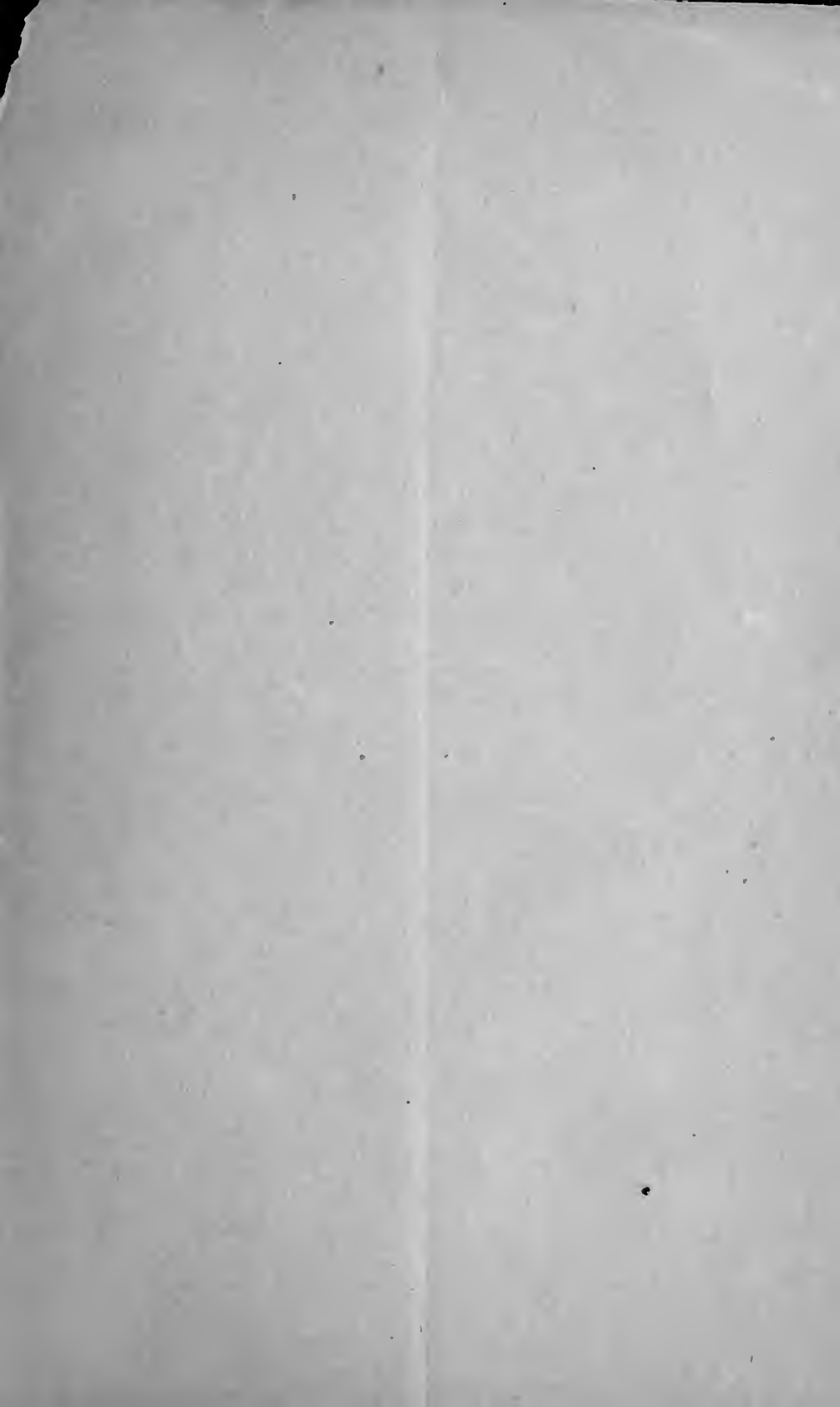
Suppose, now, that the remarks I have been making should come to the knowledge of one of those wealthy and far-seeing merchants, who may be found in New-York, and that he should say to himself, “I never knew until now the position of that Institution, nor that it had done so much for the reputation of the City, nor that it is so capable of ministering to our rising greatness. What can more effectually tend to develop the internal resources of our nation, to enable our

manufacturers to compete with those of Europe, to unfold the talent for invention, which is almost characteristic of us, than the dissemination of practical science? I will take the lead in this plan of furnishing our people industrial knowledge; and as a beginning, I will create and endow, in that University, the best chemical laboratory in the world, which may be a centre of information for our manufacturers, engineers, miners and artisans, and I will give it my name."

Suppose, now, that this should occur; then, gentlemen, the object of my address to you, this evening, is accomplished.







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